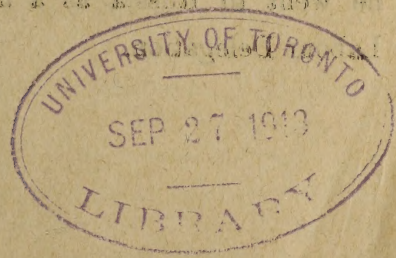


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# IS IT A CAPITALIST WAR?



BY  
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WM. STEPHEN SANDERS has been connected with the Labour and Socialist movement of Great Britain for over thirty years. He has occupied important positions in the movement, including Membership of the Executive Committee of the Labour Party, the Secretaryship of the British Section of the International Socialist Bureau, and the Secretaryship of the Fabian Society. He has made special investigations into social, industrial and political conditions in Germany, having studied in that country for a considerable period, and is author of *German Social Democracy* and *Trade Unionism in Germany*. He joined the Army in 1915, and served two years at home and abroad. In 1917 he went to Russia as a member of the British Labour Delegation.



# Is it a Capitalist War?

*"Peace talk was to be condemned; it did not bring peace one day nearer. The war must be continued recklessly. . . . Let me tell the gentlemen at Washington that we went to war by the side of the Kaiser and the Princes, and we will return side by side with them."*—Herr Stegerwald, Secretary of the German Christian Workmen, a body numbering 1,750,000 workers, speaking at the Conference of the organisation, October 29th, 1917.

*"The German working classes can never oppose the (German) State, and have never done so."*—Herr Scheidemann, leader of the German Social-Democratic Party, speaking at the Congress of the Party at Würzburg, October, 1917.

*"Germany must squeeze her enemies with a pair of pincers, namely, the military pincer and the pacifist pincer. The German armies must continue to fight vigorously, whilst the German Socialists encourage and stimulate pacifism among Germany's enemies."*—Herr David, Socialist member in the Reichstag for Mainz, speaking at the Congress of the Party at Würzburg, October 16th, 1917.

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One of the arguments constantly used by pacifists of a certain type is that all wars in modern times, and especially the present war, have been engineered by capitalists, and that statesmen and diplomatists have simply acted as their agents for the purpose of obscuring the issues and concealing the capitalist aim. An elementary knowledge of history shows that this argument is faulty. The Napoleonic wars, with which the present world-war may well be compared, arose through the popular ferment of the French Revolution, which was certainly not a capitalist uprising, and were continued owing to the desire of one man to create a world-empire by force and aggres-

sion and the natural and patriotic objection of the nations he attacked to being made subject peoples. Napoleon's war policy was frequently opposed by the capitalist classes of France, who, however, were not sufficiently strong to resist him, and whose wealth was wasted in military enterprises in order to gratify his personal ambition.

### Capitalism and Peace.

It is obvious that the material interest of the capitalists of all nations lies in peace. The complex system of international finance, trade and commerce makes it practically impossible for one great nation to make war on others without seriously damaging itself. Economists, capitalistic and socialistic and of every nationality, have demonstrated this over and over again. It is true that once war has been declared capitalists have rallied to the side of their government, but this is also true of other classes. When the Kaiser drew his sword against Europe, without consulting the German people or the German Parliament, the German Socialists gave enthusiastic support to his action in common with other sections of the community, although the Socialist leaders had often denounced the Kaiser and his Government for carrying on a policy which they declared would inevitably lead to war. It would be just as true to maintain that the war is a Socialist war as it is to argue that it is purely capitalist in origin, for without the aid of the followers of the German Socialists the Kaiser could not have hoped to wage a successful fight.

### Germany's Prosperity.

No nation had prospered during the forty odd years of peace to a greater extent than Germany. Her trade and commerce had increased by leaps and bounds. From being a poor country she had rapidly developed into one of the richest in the world. She was not checked in her economic progress by any of her trade rivals. German capitalists had been allowed



to plant themselves in every trading country, and had acquired great economic influence and enormous riches. No difficulty was found by them in the acquirement of raw materials to feed the multifarious and prosperous industries which had been built up in Germany during the last four decades. Their ships traversed the seas of the world without hindrance, thanks largely to the safety gained and preserved by the British Fleet through its centuries of ceaseless and tireless work in making the ocean roads secure from piratical attacks. Every new commercial and industrial invention and method introduced by England and America was watched and imitated by the leaders of German capitalism. Their material interests were bound up with the continuance of peace. As Herr Karl Kautsky, the German Socialist economist, has stated, "The capitalists fear war."

### Great Britain and America.

Peace is equally important to the capitalists of the Allied countries. Great Britain could have kept out of the war if she had chosen to place capitalistic interests in trade, industry, commerce and finance above national honour. While the contest raged between Germany and France and Russia, Great Britain's capitalists could have strengthened their economic position, increased their wealth and extended their trade. This is even more strongly the case in connection with America. The American capitalist, as capitalist, had everything to gain by remaining neutral. By holding aloof from the war America would have added enormously to her already vast riches and established herself as the dominant financial and commercial power of the world.

### Why Germany chose War.

But if the advantages of peace to capitalism are so evident, how was it that Germany refused to consider a peaceful solution to the international crisis of 1914 and deliberately decided upon a policy of war?

It was because the political force which dominates Germany is by tradition military and aggressive; and not content with economic development, it hungers for conquest and the extension of political power.

### The Real Rulers of Germany.

The real rulers of Germany are the Kaiser and the military caste of the Prussian Junkers. This is not the judgment of foreign observers alone, but is the declared opinion of the leaders of the German Socialist organisations. Again and again August Bebel, the last great Social-Democratic spokesman of Germany, declared in the Reichstag that Germany would never be a peaceful country until the Prussian Junkers had been driven from power. The Junkers are the landed aristocracy of Prussia, who up to the beginning of the nineteenth century held the mass of the Prussian people in actual serfdom, and who still maintain the monopoly of political power in Germany. From their ranks are recruited the main body of the officers of the army and the heads of the numerous departments of the governmental bureaucracy. Outside this circle few can hope to secure influential ministerial positions. Occasionally an important ministerial post has been given, as an experiment, to a member of the capitalist class, but directly he attempted to introduce measures not acceptable to the Junkers he was forced to retire. To the Junker the concentration of the German people on the arts of peace—trade, commerce and industry—is objectionable and dangerous. He holds that war and constant territorial expansion in Europe are necessary for the permanent welfare of Germany. He contends that the German nation must renew its youth in a periodical “bath of blood.” He expresses the utmost contempt for the English and American peoples, who, he maintains, have become degenerate through their long abstention from the invigorating experience of a great war. He quotes with malicious enjoyment the contemptuous remark of Napoleon that the English are a nation of shop keepers, while he boasts that the Germans are a race of war-like heroes. To



the Junker a period of peace is simply a time of preparation for war. He has organised practically every institution—roads, railways, industry, commerce and finance—on a military basis, so that it may be truly said that Germany is always mobilised for war. He has a whole-hearted hatred of democracy and democratic institutions. The ex-Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg openly expressed this feeling in the Reichstag shortly before the war when he declared that the Government would never consent to alter the constitution of Germany to permit of popular control, as the German people were unfitted to manage their national affairs! The Junker has carefully buttressed his position in Germany by preventing the working classes and the middle classes from obtaining any real influence in German politics. It is true that the Reichstag, the German Imperial Parliament, is elected on a system of manhood suffrage, but it has little or no control over the Government, and is, in effect, simply a debating society, flattered when it is subservient and bullied when recalcitrant. As Herr Ballin, the great German capitalist shipowner, has stated, in the Government of the Empire the Reichstag “has nothing to say.”

### The Junker in the Saddle.

There may be upholders of the Junker philosophy of war in every great country, but the important fact is that Germany is now the only great power in which the Junker class is in the governmental saddle. From this position it is able to dictate to the whole nation not only what should be done, but also what should be thought and said. In the Universities and schools throughout the German Empire the professors are compelled to inculcate the greatness and wisdom of Hohenzollern Kaiserism and Junkerdom, and woe betide any professor who dares to deviate from the line drawn for him. Only recently (October, 1917) Professor Frederick Wilhelm Foerster, of the Munich University, has been forbidden to lecture simply because he spoke in favour of peace without annexations or indemnities, the policy to which the German Chancellor gave

lip service (with his tongue in his cheek) in the Reichstag. The young men trained in the Universities go forth as exponents of the ideas impressed upon them by the professors who, from Treitschke, the great exponent of the philosophy of Prussianism, onwards, have been faithful servants of the governing caste.

### How Democracy is curbed.

It is true that the propaganda of ideas was tolerated in Germany to a certain extent provided that action did not follow utterance. But any real attack on militarist-political authority was dealt with swiftly and drastically. Hence, just before the war, when a few Socialist leaders, including Karl Liebknecht, began an anti-militarist campaign which aroused some attention, they were promptly thrown into prison, and the Socialist Party as a whole was cowed into quiescence in spite of its oft-repeated contention that Prussian militarism doomed Germany to continual wars.

### The Creator of Prussianism.

It is instructive to note what history shows to be the results of the Hollenzollern and Junker philosophy as embodied in Prussianism. Frederick the Great, the Junker hero, may be said to be the creator of Prussianism. When he mounted the throne of Prussia in 1740 he found the means of aggression at his command. His realm was small, but it possessed an army of 80,000 men. England at that time maintained an army of 17,000 men on a peace footing. The first notable action of the new king's reign was the seizure of the Austrian province of Silesia. The ruler of Austria at that time was Maria Theresa, who was 23 years of age, and whose possessions Prussia had sworn to protect. Frederick did not even pretend that he had any defensible claim to the territory. He acted on the principle, which he afterwards avowed and expounded, that kings make war for aggrandisement and are followed by learned jackals whose business it is to justify the royal acts of aggression as best they can. Frederick kept Silesia. The other great



triumph of his lifetime was the suppression of the independence of the Polish nation. Frederick successfully plotted to bring about the partition of Poland between Prussia, Austria and Russia, because he wished to take for himself—as he did—the richest part of the ancient Polish state, and he knew that he could only secure the fruits of the robbery by inducing his neighbours to become his accomplices. The Poles have never willingly submitted to Prussian rule; its tyranny in recent years has been carried to the point of causing Polish children to be beaten for saying their prayers in their mother tongue.

It need hardly be mentioned that the Poles are compelled to fight in the Prussian Army even against their own race. The present war, with the approaching defeat of Germany, has at last opened to the Polish people a prospect of the restoration of their freedom.

### The Creed of Prussianism.

The essentials of the creed of Prussianism were frankly stated by Frederick. He was fond of parading his villainy to the admiring audience of his fellow Junkers. The following passages are from Frederick's published writings:—

“Have you a mind to pass for a hero? Make boldly your approaches to crimes. Would you like to be thought virtuous? Learn to appear artfully what you are not.”

“Remember, once for all, that, in matters of kingdoms, he catches them that can, and that there is no wrong but in the case of being forced to return them.”

“It is good policy to be always attempting something, and to be perfectly persuaded that we have a right to everything that suits us. You must only take care not to make, with too much vanity, too open a proclamation of such pretensions, and especially to maintain at your Court two or three persons of eloquence, and leave it in charge with them to justify you.”

“ As to war, it is a trade, in which any, the least, scruple would spoil everything; and indeed what man of honour would ever make war if he had not the right to make rules that should authorise plunder, fire and carnage? ”

“ When Prussia shall have made her fortune, it will be time enough for her to give herself an air of fidelity to engagements and of constancy, an air which, at the most, becomes none but great States or little Sovereigns.”

“ There is nothing that tyrannises more over the head and heart than religion; because it neither agrees with our passions nor with those great political views which a monarch ought to have. The true religion of a prince is his interest and his glory. If he fears God, to speak as the priests and women do, if he fears hell, like Louis XIV. in his old age, he is apt to become timorous, childish, and fit for nothing but to be a Capuchin.”

The first principle of State politics, Frederick declared, is self-preservation and aggrandisement according to circumstances.

### Bismarck, the War Maker.

After the death of Frederick the Great in 1786 the Prussian system of policy and administration passed into feeble hands. Napoleon utterly routed the Prussian Army at Jena in 1806, and succeeding events caused a strong reaction in Germany against absolutism and the methods of Frederick. This movement culminated in the revolutionary upheaval of 1848 which in Germany was hopelessly crushed. The reactionary forces recovered their ground, and the Prussian system was restored and strengthened by Bismarck, who is justly entitled to be called the second founder of Prussianism. His first great exploit was the attack on Denmark in 1864 for the purpose of annexing the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein to Prussia. In this act of aggression he induced Austria to act as the accomplice of Prussia. The King of Prussia defended the robbery by stating “ that he wished for peace, he had done



everything to maintain it, but he must have the Elbe Duchies, Schleswig and Holstein, for his people wished it. They forced him, and he must yield." This was the excuse, although the Prussian Kings have always declared that the people have no right to a voice in deciding what they should or should not do! In 1866 Prussia attacked Austria in order to wrest from her the headship of the Germanic States which the Austrian Emperors had inherited and exercised for centuries. The King of Prussia publicly declared:—

"I have left no way untried in order to discover a method of maintaining the blessings of peace honourably on a firm foundation for the whole German Fatherland. God has disposed otherwise. I can look up to Him when, calling for His all-powerful support, I draw the sword for the defence of the sacred possessions of my people."

The truth was subsequently told by no less an authority than Field-Marshal Count Helmuth von Moltke in the following passage:—

"The war of 1866 was entered upon not because the existence of Prussia was threatened, nor in obedience to public opinion and the voice of the people. It was a struggle long foreseen, calmly prepared for, recognised as a necessity by the Cabinet not for territorial aggrandisement or material advantage, but for an ideal end, the establishment of power. Not a foot of land was exacted from conquered Austria, but it had to renounce all part in the hegemony of Germany."

### The Forgery of the Ems Telegram.

In 1870 Bismarck forced war upon France. The triumph of Prussia in that year had been prepared by a system of espionage and corruption such as had never been created before.

Bismarck himself has told us how he made the conflict inevitable by garbling the famous Ems telegram; a crime which has been denounced by German Socialists as vigorously as by Frenchmen. The telegram reached him when he was

in the company of Moltke and Roon. Bismarck himself describes what followed:—

“ In the presence of my two guests I reduced the telegram by striking out words, but without adding to or altering the form of the telegram. The difference in the effect of the abbreviated text of the Ems telegram as compared with that produced by the original was not the result of stronger words, but of the form which made this announcement appear decisive, while Abeken's version would only have been regarded as a fragment of a negotiation still pending and to be continued in Berlin.

“ After I had read out the concentrated edition, Moltke remarked, ‘ Now it has a different ring. It sounded before like a parley; now it is like a flourish in answer to a challenge.’ The guests suddenly discovered their pleasure in eating and drinking, and spoke in more cheerful vein. Roon said, ‘ Our God of old lives still, and will not let us perish in disgrace.’ ”

### Germany Prussianised.

The modern German Empire was founded on the Prussian victories of 1870 and 1871, and by the Imperial constitution then adopted Prussia secured the mastery over all Germany. The King of Prussia became German Emperor, the head of an Empire built up by “ blood and iron.” The philosophy of Junkerdom spread from Prussia throughout the whole of Germany, and hence became a still more dangerous threat to the peace of the world. The Kaiser's advocates in this country have constantly asserted that he steadfastly endeavoured to preserve the world's peace in his control of German foreign policy. Yet they know that the “ mailed fist ” was flourished in the world's face and the donning of “ shining armour ” was threatened at times of international crises to the dismay and anger of the German Socialists, who protested against the bullying tone of their Kaiser's “ diplomacy.” We now know that in 1902 he sought to range Britain beside



Germany in a war with the United States about the Venezuela grievance. A few months later, as the "Willy-Nicky" series of telegrams proves, he was inciting the Czar to hostility against Britain, offering German aid, and planning the invasion and occupation of Denmark. These incidents are in perfect accord with the traditional Junker policy, which recognises no bounds to the political and territorial expansion of Prussianised Germany, and which holds no bond sacred which stands in the way of her aggrandisement.

### **Prussianism against the World.**

Can any reasonable and unprejudiced mind, reviewing these facts, doubt that the Prussianism which Frederick the Great formulated 150 years ago and which Bismarck perfected was the primary cause of the present war; and that, even if Great Britain had changed its economic form from capitalism to some other system, the peace of the world would not have been in constant danger until Prussianism, with its doctrine of the Will-to-Power and its lust for conquest, had been rendered powerless for evil?

### **Why Germany must be defeated.**

It has been urged by pacifists that although Great Britain may have been justified in entering the war in 1914, the time has now come to begin negotiations with Germany in order to terminate the conflict; and they state that the opposition to this view is purely capitalistic in origin. They declare that the interests of capitalists are bound up with the continuance of the war, and hence the struggle is being prolonged for their benefit alone. This argument is as fallacious as that put forward by pacifists with regard to the origin of the war. The longer the war lasts the more adversely does it affect trade, commerce, industry and finance. If the war ended at once, capitalists whose business has been heavily curtailed and damaged, when not completely stopped, could resume trade,

and renew their commercial relations with foreign countries, including those now opposed to the Allies. The real reason why the overwhelming mass of all classes, including capitalists and workmen, anxious as they are for peace, are not prepared to respond to the invitations to cease hostilities that emanate from Berlin is not because they wish to profit materially by the war, but because they consider that a peace brought about under existing circumstances would leave Germany in a position to put forward claims which no democratic nation could accept, and to prepare for another war when it suited her purpose. Every country with a democratic tradition recognises instinctively that its future safety depends upon the defeat of Germany. Hence against our enemy are banded all the great nations who have acquired political freedom, resolved to continue the struggle to a victorious end, not in the interests of capitalism, but in order to free the world from the menace which threatens human and national liberty and progress.

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